

Message Text

SECRET

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12
ACTION SS-25

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INFO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

S E C R E T CANBERRA 1637

EXDIS

DEPT PLS PASS OSD WASHDC AND CINCPAC FOR POLAD

WELLINGTON FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY CLEMENTS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, AS, US, NZ
SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY CLEMENTS' CANBERRA VISIT

1. DEPSEC CLEMENTS HAD FULL DAY OF PROFITABLE, SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION MARCH 14 WITH PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM, DEFENCE MINISTER BARNARD AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS SECRETARY RENOUF. PRIME MINISTER ADJUSTED HIS SCHEDULE TO PERMIT 45 MINUTE MEETING AND LUNCH WITH DEPSEC. ATMOSPHERE EXCELLENT THROUGHOUT. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS FOLLOWS.

2. DEFENSE FACILITIES - BOTH WHITLAM AND BARNARD EMPHASIZED THAT US FACILITIES ISSUE WAS EFFECTIVELY DEFUSED FOR NOW IN DOMESTIC POLITICS, AND THEY WERE OPTIMISTIC THAT THIS WOULD CONTINUE. BOTH EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT FOR MISSION OF FACILITIES. DEPSEC NOTED THAT WHITLAM'S FORTHRIGHT DISCUSSION DURING LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE IN FEBRUARY HAD BEEN MOST HELPFUL.

3. NPW VISITS - DEPSEC MADE FORCEFUL PRESENTATION ON NPW VISITS TO WHITLAM, BARNARD AND RENOUF. ALL (INCLUDING NOTABLY PM) WERE RELATIVELY FORTHCOMING THAT, WITH MAJOR ROADBLOCKS OUT OF WAY, REMAINING ISSUES OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT, STATE-FEDERAL RELATIONS, AND PORT/SURVEYS SHOULD RESULT IN FAVORABLE DECISION.

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ALL GAVE POSITIVE PRELIMINARY REACTION TO DEPSEC SUGGESTION THAT

TASK FORCE LED BY USS CORAL SEA MIGHT VISIT FREEMANTLE DURING CORAL SEA CELEBRATIONS PERIOD EARLY MAY. BARNARD ASKED THAT USG NOT FORMALLY REQUEST INCLUSION OF NPW IN THIS VISIT, SINCE HE DID NOT EXPECT AUSTRALIAN DECISION COULD BE REACHED IN TIME. (COMMENT: BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT WE CAN ULTIMATELY HELP FORCE POLITICAL EFFORT REQUIRED FOR THIS DECISION BY REQUESTING A SPECIFIC NPW VISIT, IF NOT WITH USS CORAL SEA, THEN PERHAPS FOR JUNE OR JULY DEPENDING UPON DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN GOA.)

4. SOUTH PACIFIC NUCLEAR FREE ZONE - RENOUF SAID GNZ HAD NOW SUPPLIED TEXT OF SPNFZ PROPOSAL WHICH WOULD INITIALLY APPLY TO LAND AREAS AND TERRITORIAL SEA. PM ROWLING WISHES DISCUSS PROPOSAL IN CANBERRA DURING VISIT NEXT WEEK AND SUBSEQUENTLY DURING ANZUS DISCUSSIONS. RENOUF SAID NEW ZEALAND LABOR PARTY (ABETTED HE BELIEVES BY PERMSEC CORNER) SEEMS OBSESSED WITH SPNFZ CONCEPT. RENOUF EXPECTS IT WILL BE TROUBLESOME. ALTHOUGH GOA HAS NOT SUPPORTED SPNFZ, RENOUF BELIEVES SYMPATHY COULD DEVELOP BETWEEN THE TWO LABOR PARTIES. DEPSEC CLEMENTS AND ZURHELLEN POINTED OUT REAL PROBLEMS THIS SORT OF VAGUE PROPOSAL COULD CAUSE. ZURHELLEN EXPRESSED SURPRISE THAT ANZUS ALLIES WOULD CONSIDER ANY INITIATIVE SO FRAMED AS TO INHIBIT US ABILITY TO CARRY OUT ITS COMMITMENTS WITHOUT COMPARABLE EFFECT UPON SOVIET UNION. (COMMENT: CLEARLY ADOD AND DFA WILL ARGUE FIRMLY AGAINST SPNFZ WITHIN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT.)

5. OMEGA - WHITLAM AND RENOUF INDEPENDENTLY RAISED OMEGA AND LEFT IMPRESSION THAT GOA MIGHT ULTIMATELY APPROVE AFTER JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORT IS RELEASED.

6. GENERAL DEFENSE POLICY - BARNARD IN LENGTHY PRESENTATION SAID AUSTRALIANS IDENTIFY NO GREAT THREAT OVER NEXT TEN TO FIFTEEN YEARS AND PLAN TO USE THIS PERIOD TO CEMENT THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS, TO RESTRUCTURE THEIR ARMED FORCES TO MEET REGIONAL DEFENSE NEEDS, TO BUILD AN INFRASTRUCTURE WHICH WILL FACILITATE FUTURE EXPANSION IF NEEDED, AND TO DEVELOP THEIR CAPACITY FOR SELF RELIANCE. AT SAME TIME, THEY CONSIDER ANZUS TREATY IMPORTANT TO THEIR FUTURE AND IT WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THEIR THINKING. FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS THEY PLAN TO SPEND AROUND THREE PERCENT OF GNP ON DEFENSE (A\$1.8 BILLION IN FY 75).

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7. SECRETARY CLEMENTS GAVE AN OVERVIEW OF U.S. STRATEGIC THINKING REGARDING THE REGION. HE COMMENTED THAT LONG LEAD TIMES SEVERELY HAMPER MODERN MILITARY PLANNING AND SO THE ASSUMPTION THAT NO MAJOR THREAT WILL OCCUR FOR TEN YEARS SHOULD BE EXAMINED CLOSELY. HE COMMENTED SPECIFICALLY ON SINGAPORE'S IMPORTANCE, THE CURRENT SITUATION IN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM, AND THE RELATIONSHIP OF SALT TO OVERALL US DEFENSE

THINKING. HE ALSO STRESSED THE NEED FOR CONTINUED
CLOSE BILATERAL COOPERATION IN AREAS SUCH AS MILITARY EQUIPMENT,
JOINT EXERCISES AND CONSULTATIONS AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT.

8. INDIAN OCEAN - DISCUSSED BRIEFLY WITH BOTH BARNARD AND
WHITLAM, WHO DEPLORED GREAT POWER COMPETITION IN INDIAN OCEAN.
FOLLOWING DEPSEC CLEMENTS' PRESENTATION ON INDIAN OCEAN
BALANCE OF FORCES AND US THINKING, WHITLAM SAID THAT GOA COULD
NOT PUBLICLY CONDONE DIEGO GARCIA BUT HE IMPLIED HIS UNDERSTANDING
OF OUR NEED FOR IT. RENOUF SUBSEQUENTLY NOTED THAT SINCE
INDIAN NUCLEAR EXPLOSION WHITLAM HAD BEEN MUCH QUIETER ON THE
SUBJECT.

9. MILITARY PROCUREMENT - EXTENSIVE AND INDECISIVE
DISCUSSION OF THIS TOPIC WILL BE REPORTED SEPARATELY.

10. DEPSEC VISIT WAS HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL WITH ATMOSPHERE OF
ALLIANCE CORDIALITY PARTICULARLY GRATIFYING.
HARROP

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED OSD AND CINCPAC.

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NNN

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